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LETTER DATED 6 JANUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward, on behalf of Chief Tom Ikimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and Chairman of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, the text of the communiqué issued at the end of the seventh meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, held at Abuja on 19 December 1997.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ibrahim A. GAMBARI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Communiqué issued at the conclusion of the seventh meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, held at Abuja on 19 December 1997

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Five on Sierra Leone held their seventh meeting at ECOWAS secretariat headquarters at Abuja on 19 December 1997.

2. All the members of the Committee were present, namely:

- The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire;
- The Republic of Ghana;
- The Republic of Guinea;
- The Republic of Liberia;
- The Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- The ECOWAS Executive Secretary;
- The representative of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

3. Attending as observers were:

- The Republic of Sierra Leone, represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sierra Leone;
- The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Sierra Leone.

4. The meeting reviewed the situation in Sierra Leone in the light of the reports presented by the Force Commander of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Sierra Leone.

5. The Ministers reaffirmed the central objective of the ECOWAS peace plan for Sierra Leone, which is the restoration of constitutional order in that country and the reinstatement of the legitimate Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

6. In this regard, the Ministers emphasized that the ECOWAS peace plan for Sierra Leone, adopted at Conakry on 23 October 1997, remained the best framework for the restoration of peace and constitutional order to Sierra Leone.

7. The Ministers reaffirmed the date of 22 April 1998 for the reinstatement of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to office, and emphasized the need to adhere to the timetable of the peace plan accordingly.

8. The Ministers reiterated that the Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was the sole and legitimate Government of Sierra Leone.

9. The Ministers noted that there had been some violations of the ECOWAS and United Nations sanctions imposed on the junta in Sierra Leone. In this connection, they noted specifically the violations of the arms embargo and travel restrictions on members of the illegal regime and their families.

10. They therefore called upon all countries, and in particular Member States of ECOWAS, to strictly adhere to those sanctions. In addition, countries harbouring members of the military junta, their families and all others on the restricted list were requested to repatriate such persons to Sierra Leone.

11. The Ministers were informed of the upgrading by the illegal regime of an airstrip at Mabguraka into a full-fledged airport for the illegal importation of arms and other supplies. The Ministers noted that this was in violation of the sanctions and embargo regimes and therefore mandated ECOMOG to ensure that the airstrip was not used.

12. The Ministers noted that the ECOWAS peace plan for Sierra Leone provided for the deployment of a United Nations observer mission along with ECOMOG in Sierra Leone to implement the disarmament process. In this connection, they urged the Security Council to accelerate efforts towards the deployment of a United Nations military observer mission to Sierra Leone. They also called on Member States urgently to contribute more troops to enhance ECOMOG operational capability in Sierra Leone.

13. In this regard, the Ministers expressed satisfaction at the recent deployment of a Ghanaian naval vessel for ECOMOG to enhance the implementation of the sanctions. They called on other Member States to make available similar contributions to ECOMOG.

14. The Ministers deplored the incessant and unprovoked attacks on ECOMOG peacekeepers. They reaffirmed the right of ECOMOG to self-defence.

15. The Ministers noted the intention of the Government of Liberia to bring to an end the mandate of ECOMOG in Liberia by 2 February 1998, and they considered that this would have implications for the implementation of the ECOWAS peace plan for Sierra Leone. They therefore decided to refer this matter to the Chairman of ECOWAS.

16. The Ministers expressed their profound gratitude and appreciation to General Sani Abacha, Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, and the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the hospitality and excellent facilities provided for the success of the meeting.